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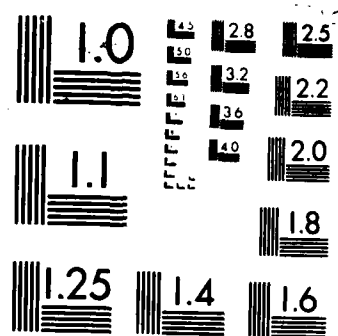
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# AIR WAR COLLEGE

## RESEARCH REPORT

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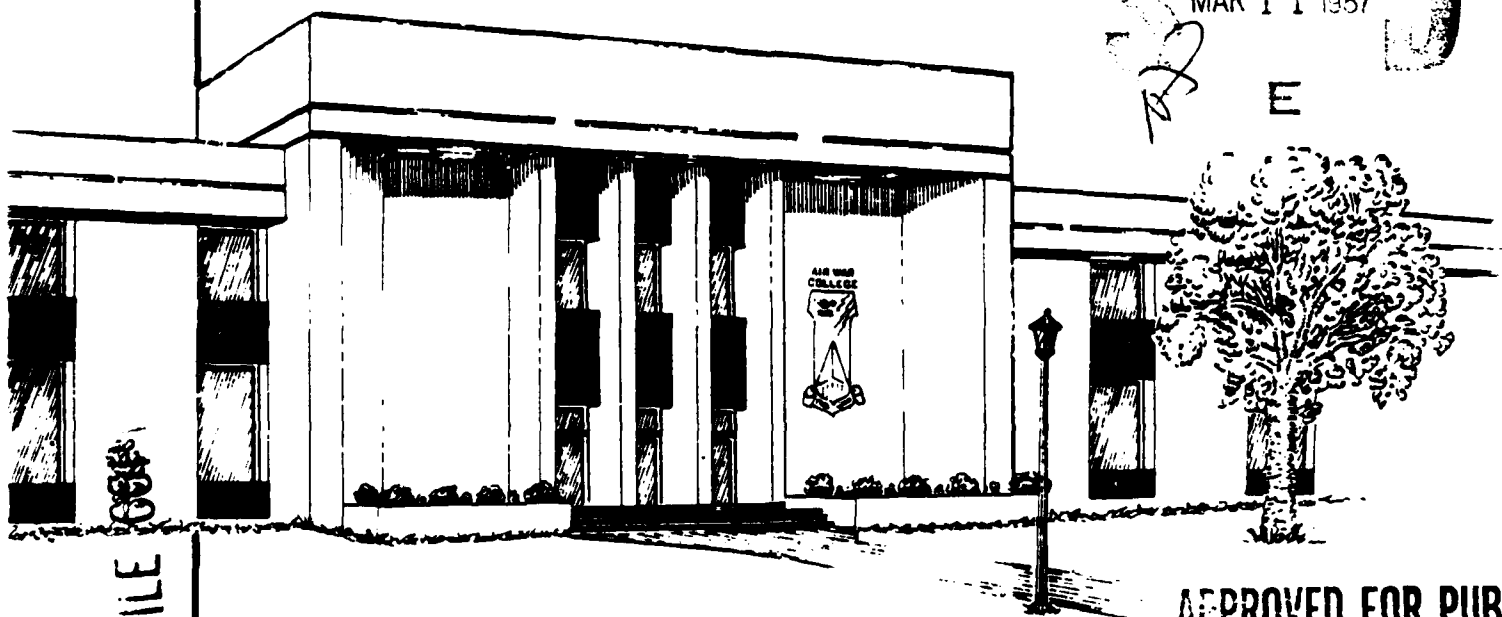
EVOLUTION OF THE USAF SENIOR  
OFFICER COMBAT EMPLOYMENT COURSE

By COLONEL JACK R. GARRIS

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MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

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AIR WAR COLLEGE  
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EVOLUTION OF THE USAF SENIOR  
OFFICER COMBAT EMPLOYMENT COURSE

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A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY

IN

FULFILLMENT OF THE RESEARCH  
REQUIREMENT

RESEARCH ADVISOR: COLONEL WILLIAM C. ALLISON

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA  
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## AIR WAR COLLEGE RESEARCH REPORT ABSTRACT

TITLE: EVOLUTION OF THE USAF SENIOR OFFICER COMBAT EMPLOYMENT COURSE

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For whatever the cause, the knowledge and the study of large unit operations within the United States Air Force, especially in a "joint" environment, have steadily and continually declined. For years the pool of senior officers with warfighting experience made up for this deficiency. Now, however, in the absence of such experience and of adequate study, the Air Force must direct additional effort and focus to the most critical subject of all - warfighting. To correct this deficiency the Air Force Chief of Staff directed the Commander, Air University, to develop and implement a Senior Officer Combat Employment Course for selected senior warfighting general officers. The course is to provide a unique, operations and combat oriented experience, designed for USAF Air Component Commanders, to enhance their understanding of warfare and their ability to conduct air operations in a "joint context." The objectives of the course are to stimulate senior USAF officers thinking about warfighting and to enhance their ability to:

- Formulate the objectives of airpower;
- Integrate the combat capabilities of all assets;
- Make sound, well-reasoned decisions;
- Apply air doctrine in a joint environment.

To insure that the course content reflects a "joint" view, as directed by the Air Force Chief of Staff, two AWC Army officer students are directly supporting the development of course materials and providing liaison with the Combined Arms Center, Fort Leavenworth - the Army's executive agent for supporting this extremely important Air Force project.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Colonel Jack R. Garris (M.B.A. Boston University) is an avid student of warfighting - especially warfighting in a "joint" environment. Following an assignment as a war planner in Headquarters, United States Army Europe (USAREUR), he had an assignment in the Plans Directorate, Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF). As this headquarters evolved into a unified headquarters (United States Central Command), he became convinced that the United States Army could not go it alone in modern warfare - it must fight as part of the joint team. This realization was reinforced numerous times as Colonel Garris commanded a battalion in the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) for 31 months, including a six month deployment to Sinai, Egypt as part of the Multinational Peace Keeping Force and Observers mission. Colonel Garris is a graduate of the Army's Command and General Staff College and the Air Force's Air War College, Class of 1986.



## EVOLUTION OF THE USAF SENIOR OFFICER

### COMBAT EMPLOYMENT COURSE

#### INTRODUCTION

It is significant that great military thinkers like Napoleon, Clausewitz, Moltke, and Fock did not consider the tactical schooling of leaders as the most important thing -- they esteemed above all an intellectual training derived from a comparative study of the past ... as an orientation course, this series aimed particularly at enlarging the professional horizon from the inevitable limitation of small peace - strength garrisons, to the greater responsibilities of high command... 1

Not only has the US Air Force not had recent combat experience involving the employment of large-units, it has neglected the study of this vital area of the art of war. Current deliberations over the defense budget point up the material needs of the Air Force. Thus, the problem the Air Force faces is to convince the officer corps that there is more to war than weapons systems and tactics. The intellectual side of war expresses itself most readily at the operational level. Military leaders from Napoleon to General Aviaham Adan (Yom Kipper War) won their battles primarily due to operational superiority over their enemies.

The question frequently comes up - "Why study large-unit operations when

few if any officers will ever command multi-wing or larger forces." Even if this shortsighted view was true, there are other arguments to consider. As the operational sphere increases due to technology, so the intellectual sphere must keep pace through proper theory. The art of conducting large-unit operations lies in applying principles in the form of doctrine to solutions of problems, in ignoring hazards when necessary, and in taking such chances as may be justified by the type of leaders and of the troops on both sides. As the end of operations is the battle, to properly direct and control the prior operations, it is necessary to clearly understand the maneuver to be attempted. This understanding must be based on theory. Operational success can never be attained by merely following a formula. There is an effective reply to every maneuver and for each example of a successful operational maneuver, a similar example may be cited of its failure. However, the US Air Force has done little to prepare its senior officers to apply aerospace forces in armed conflict.

With this horrific fact in mind, how can the Air Force prepare its commanders of large-units to face the tempo and uncertainty of modern, high-intensity, mobile war? What is the basis of their large-unit doctrine? How do its commanders practice and apply this doctrine in peacetime? Napoleon, Clausewitz and Marshal Fock can give the Air Force answers and insight into the preparation required of senior commanders.

NAPOLEON: Tactics, evolutions, artillery, and engineer sciences can be learned from manuals like geometry; but the knowledge of the higher conduct of war can only be acquired by studying the

history of wars and the battles of great generals, and by one's own experiences. 2

CLAUSEWITZ: The knowledge needed by a senior commander is distinguished by the fact that it can only be attained by a special talent, through the medium of reflection, study, and thought: an intellectual instinct which extracts the essence from the phenomena of life, as a bee sucks honey from a flower .... knowledge must be so absorbed into the mind that it almost ceases to exist in a separate, objective way. 3

FOCH: What is the form of this teaching born from history -- it came out in the shape of a theory of war which can be taught -- which shall be taught to you -- and in the shape of doctrine, which you will be taught to practice. 4

#### BACKGROUND

For whatever the cause, the knowledge and the study of large-unit operations have steadily and continually declined. For years the pool of experienced officers from World War II made up for this deficiency. Now, however, this void of lost experience must be filled in order to keep senior officers oriented to the tasks of warfighting.

In an effort to fill this void, the Chief of Staff of the United States Air Force, CSAF, directed the Commander of the Air University to fully develop

and implement a Senior Officer Combat Employment Course for selected warfighting general officers. The pilot course was conducted in January 1986. Selection of the general officer attendees for this pilot class was made by the CSAF and was based on current job positions. Future selections will be based on being selected to fill designated job positions. 5

The stated purpose of the Senior Officer Combat Employment Course is "to provide a unique, operational, combat oriented experience designed to enhance the understanding of warfare and the ability to conduct air operations in a joint environment." 6 Joint and combined operations were the prevailing themes since it was generally felt that the Air Force would not fight a war alone.

At the outset it was recognized that the Senior Officer Combat Employment Course could not nor would not replace practical experience. However, for it to be most effective, the environment created must challenge the attendees' warfighting thought processes and provide them, in a given combat situation, a better capability to:

- Formulate the objectives to be achieved by air power.
- Integrate the combat capabilities of all assets available to an air component commander.
- Make sound decisions.
- Apply aerospace doctrine to joint operations. 7

## METHODOLOGY

The first class was intended to be unique and special. It was used to critique, refine, and provide guidance for further course development. The inaugural class would then attend during April 1986, with two additional classes to be conducted during the remainder of the calendar year. The goal is to conduct four classes per year with 10-15 students per class.

Students selected to attend would be by direct invitation of the CSAF. However, recommendations would be solicited from the major commands, and every effort would be made to achieve a dynamic mix of backgrounds, and expertise of attendees. 8

The initial course ran approximately seven days; however, following the completion of the wargaming facility at the Air University, the course of instruction will be expanded to approximately 10-12 days. The major focus of all activity will be on the immediate constructive feedback on the dynamics and the consequences of decisions. Attendees will be placed in an intense environment with minimum outside distractors. The entire course will be of high intensity, emphasizing the fog and friction of warfare. Correctly determining "right answers" will not be as important as understanding the process necessary to ask the right questions. 9

The primary method of instruction will be interactive seminars. These seminars, wherever possible, will be led by active duty or retired general

officers with extensive warfighting experience, preferably at larger unit levels. They will be assisted by resident or guest facilitators. The guest facilitator must have impeccable credentials, combat experience and recognized leadership skills. When appropriate, these facilitators should be from other nations or services. The facilitators main purpose is to promote discussions and ensure a free-flowing exchange of ideas. 10

#### CHARTER

The individuals charged with the development and implementation of the course were directed to create for the attendees a unique environment in which they could consider and analyze the employment of aerospace forces. As a result, the following course charter evolved:

- Raise the levels of consciousness about the spectrum of conflict and the employment of forces in low and high intensity conventional warfare and the transition to nuclear war.
- Enhance the ability of attendees to articulate and apply current air doctrine.
- Enable the attendees to evaluate the combat decision-making process by providing a dynamic environment for problem confrontation and solution through case studies, wargaming, and interactive seminars.

- Provide an atmosphere for the free and open exchange of ideas by imposing a strict regimen to diminish external distractors and providing immediate and constructive feedback based on individual development rather than intra-group competition. 11

#### THE ARMY'S ROLE

To insure that the "warrior generals" would be confronted with air operations in a "joint" environment, the Commander, Air University, requested from the Commander, United States Army Training Command (TRADOC), the assignment of an experienced Army O-6 to become a full time member of the Air University working group, tasked with developing and implementing the Senior Officer Course. In order to support the Air University Commander's request, while maximizing personnel resources, the TRADOC Commander directed the Senior Army Liaison Officer at the Air War College (AWC) to identify and to provide requisite AWC Army officer student support to accomplish this project. He further directed the Combined Arms Center, Fort Leavenworth, to provide support as required.

It was concluded that the basic mission of the AWC Army officers involved in this project would be direct support of the Center for Aerospace Doctrine, Research and Education (CADRE) in the development of course materials and liaison with the Combined Arms Center, Fort Leavenworth. It was further concluded that two Army officers, preferably with "joint" experience, would be needed to professionally accomplish this mission. Their principal role would

be to act as resident experts to insure that the course content reflects a "joint" view, as directed by the CSAF.

In early August, at the very outset of AWC of 1986, two Army officer students were selected to support the development of the Senior Officer Course. They immediately established contact and liaison with the Air University working group and with both TRADOC and the Combined Arms Center. The first major task was to provide a scope statement, course objectives and a suggested read-ahead list for the Army block of instruction. 12

Based upon the Air Force's charter that all instruction be presented by senior, experienced, warfighting generals, it was concluded that the Commander, Combined Arms Center, Fort Leavenworth, would be the appropriate instructor to provide the Army's current doctrine especially for fighting and conducting joint operations. The Commander of the Combined Arms Center and Fort Leavenworth concurred. 13

Close coordination and information exchanges between the AWC and the Combined Arms Center became the norm as the Army presentation evolved. To insure that there were no major disconnects and to properly prepare the Air Force facilitator, an Army O-6 from the Combined Arms Center visited the AWC in December and presented an overview of the proposed script for the first "warrior" class. Following indepth discussions and suggestions regarding critical Army and Air Force issues the Army O-6 returned to Fort Leavenworth to make final changes and to obtain his commander's approval. 14



The Army presentation was presented on 24 January 1986; however, due to unforeseen circumstances, the Commander, Combined Arms Center, regrettably was unable to attend. His deputy, a brigadier, was forced to stand in his stead.

#### RESULTS OF FIRST WARRIOR CLASS

Overall the Army presentation was well received. However, it was clearly felt that there was not enough time for discussion; and that the briefing needed to be oriented more to an Air Force general officer level audience. The general consensus was that too much time was spent on what Air Land Battle (ALB) means to the Army and too little time on what it means to the Air Force.

As a result, recommendations on the Army's presentation for subsequent classes calls for increased emphasis on the following areas: implications for the Air Force with regards to the Air Land Battle Doctrine; and, the Army's perspective of key issues that must be worked out, e.g., interdiction of second echelon, local air superiority to include when needed, and interface of Air Force/Army assets to accomplish local superiority. 15

#### FUTURE

Preparations for the inaugural class, scheduled for April 1986, has already begun. The course has been expanded to two weeks, and each session has been expanded to two and one half hours. These increases should reduce the pressures on each session and on the attendees. It should also enable the

attendees to make better preparations for each session.

With regard to the Army's session, the comments and recommendations from the pioneer class have already been passed to the Combined Arms Center. Hopefully, they will be incorporated into the next update. Additionally, the absolute necessity that the Army presenter be a senior Army general was re-emphasized.

In any event, the Air Force's Senior Officer Combat Employment Course is off and running. With four classes currently scheduled per year it will mean that at least one class will be conducted during the summer months when there is no AWC class in session. This will mean that the Army's Senior Liaison Officer, himself, will have to fill this void. However, his familiarity with the contents of this paper will enable him to provide: the necessary interface during the interlude of successive AWC classes; and select appropriate AWC Army students to accomplish this task during the academic year.

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## GLOSSARY

ALB	Air Land Battle
AU	Air University
AWC	Air War College
CADRE	Center for Aerospace Doctrine, Research and Education
CSAF	Chief of Staff, United States Air Force
RDJTF	Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force
TRADOC	Training and Doctrine Command
USAREUR	United States Army Europe

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